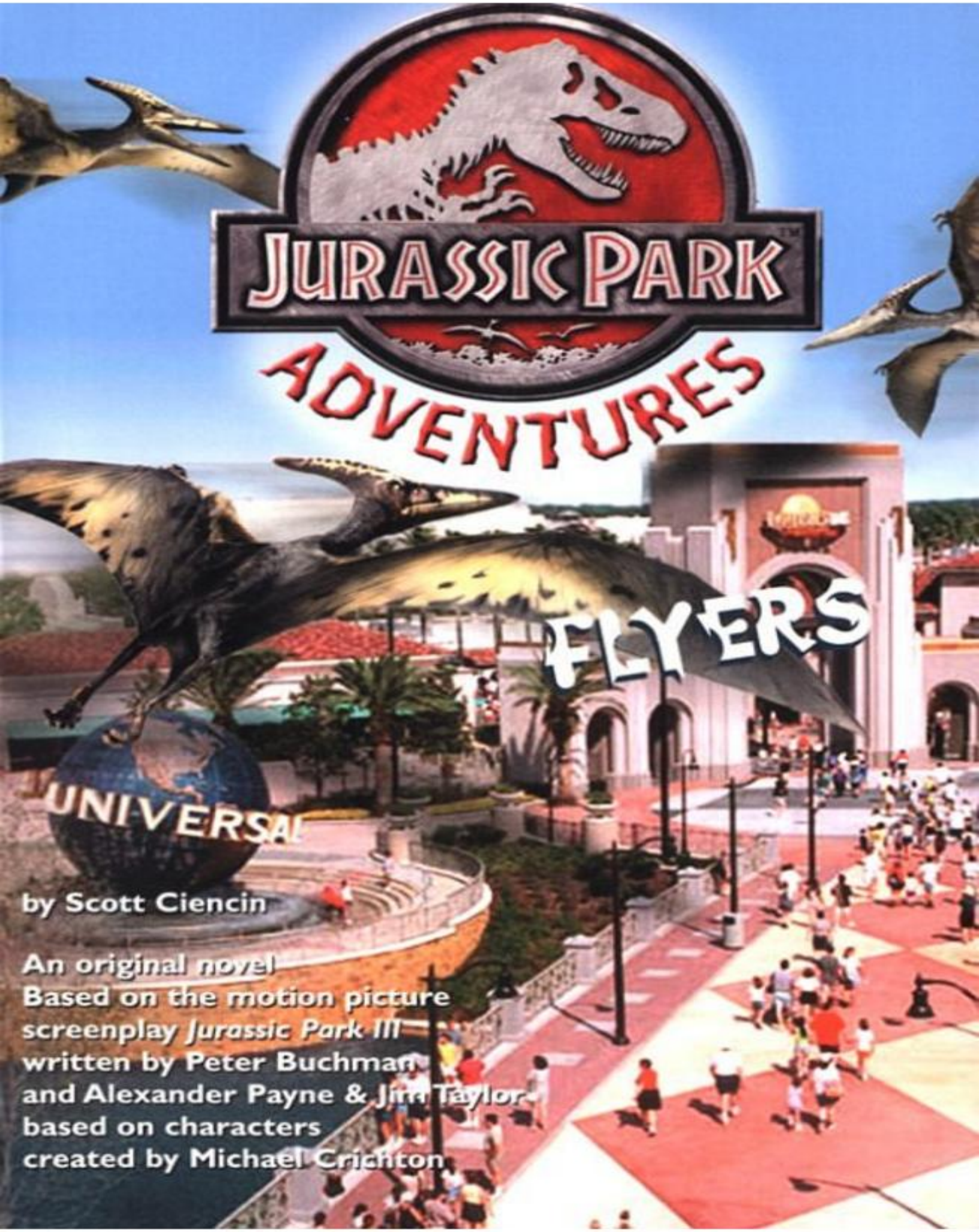

by Scott Ciencin

An original novel
Based on the motion picture
screenplay *Jurassic Park III*
written by Peter Buchman
and Alexander Payne & Jim Taylor
based on characters
created by Michael Crichton

#3

FLYERS

By Scott Ciencin

AN ORIGINAL NOVEL

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Alexander Payne & Jim Taylor
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RANDOM HOUSE NEW YORK

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This was *not* part of the show!

Read all the Jurassic Park Adventures!

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A NOTE TO PARENTS:

This book is appropriate for ages 8 and up.

The Jurassic Park films are rated PG-13.
Consult www.filmratings.com for further information.

Special thanks to Cindy Chang of Universal Studios and to Alice Alfonsi, Lisa Findlay, Michael Wortzman, Artie Bennett, Jenny Golub, Christopher Shea, Stephanie Finnegan, and Colleen Fellingham of Random House for their work on this book.

CHAPTER 1

Alan Grant ran for his life through the jungles of Isla Sorna. The biggest super-predator of them all thundered after him. He heard the Spinosaurus aegypticus roar and looked back to see the dinosaur's dark eyes glimmer with hunger and anticipation. The towering animal's crocodile-like jaws snapped at empty air as the massive sail rising from its spine sliced through low-hanging vines. The ground shook and explosions of mud and muck rose with the sailback's heavy strides.

SPINOSAURUS

The breathless scientist raced across a clearing, the bright tropical sun in his eyes. Ahead lay a high mountain wall cut in half by a narrow ravine. With renewed strength, he darted toward the divide.

Thin trees exploded and chunks of timber flew in every direction as the dinosaur burst from the jungle in pursuit of its prey. Alan raced on worriedly, scanning the ravine walls, looking for cave mouths where smaller predators might be hiding. Luckily, the walls were sheer. Nothing would leap out at him from either side of the ravine—but on the other hand, he would have no place to hide.

The footfalls behind him grew louder. The ravine was narrow, but not narrow enough to keep the predator from following.

The ground ahead dipped suddenly and Alan stumbled down a steep shelf. At the base, he found himself staring at a long flat stretch cut off at the far end by a twenty-foot-high wall of fallen boulders. Light peeked out from between the stones, and some of the gaps looked large enough for a human to squeeze between.

Rhhhh-ahhhhrrrr!

Alan risked a look back. The surprised Spino-saurus was tumbling down the sharp slide. Alan ran even faster. The Spinosaurus would need only a moment to recover its footing. Then the dinosaur would be on him!

The ground shuddered behind Alan as he lunged toward the wall of fallen stones. He spotted a decent-sized opening between the boulders and was about to climb into it when another explosive footfall rocked the ground and made the boulders shift.

The rocks smashed together, and the opening suddenly disappeared. If Alan had reached it a moment sooner and tried to climb through, he would have been crushed!

He turned to face the Spinosaurus. The dinosaur stood thirty feet away, watching Alan with what might have been delight.

Terror gripped Alan.

"All right, all right," Alan whispered to himself. "Try and be steady here. You've studied this behavior before. You know what it's doing—trying to scare you. Fear flavors the meat. Don't give in."

The Spinosaurus roared again and clicked its claws hungrily. Its mouth dripped with saliva.

"Right," Alan said, spinning and leaping at the rocks, desperate to find a foothold, a handhold, some way to climb over or through the barrier.

With a final roar, the Spinosaurus charged!

Alan climbed. The boulders slid beneath him. The earth trembled with the dinosaur's approach and the rocks slipped, sending Alan back to the ground. He spun and scrambled to his feet just in time to see the Spinosaurus's huge head block out the

world. Sharp teeth glinted and a terrible tongue wriggled as a cloud of foul-smelling breath made Alan choke and recoil.

Suddenly, chains rattled, and the dinosaur yelped in confusion. Its gaping maw was lifted up and away as the trap Alan and his team had laid for the super-predator was sprung.

"Hah," Alan said weakly as he watched the huge nets raise the dinosaur off the ground. From the seemingly smooth walls of the ravine came metal arms with chains as thick as a man's torso, and netting specially designed to hold the Spinosaurus.

In seconds, the raging dinosaur was secure. Alan tipped his hat to the dinosaur, who roared in frustration. Then he waited for the rest of his team to emerge from their hiding places.

Alan spent the day supervising the relocation of the captured Spinosaurus to an isolated area of Isla Sorna. As night fell, he returned to the Jurassic Park Ranger Station with Deborah Holland, his youthful-looking honey-blond security chief. Three men in dark suits were waiting.

Roger Hearne, the spokesman for the group, riffled through his briefcase. He withdrew a handful of files as he prepared to address Alan and Deborah in the conference room.

Alan leaned in close to Deborah's ear and nodded toward Hearne. "A GQ model with an MBA. Perhaps the most threatening predator of all."

"Want me to take him down with a tranquilizer dart?" Deborah asked.

"We'll see," said Alan.

Hearne cleared his throat and Alan leaned back and sighed. He'd been through enough meetings with representatives from the investment board that he felt he could recite their dialogue for them.

Hearne addressed a laundry list of concerns. Most notable, as always, was the lack of income this dinosaur preserve and research facility was generating. He ran through the costs for today's "exercise," as he called it, and discussed how he would have to hide the related expenditures under various "extraneous expenses" to keep even more investors from pulling their support.

“Mr. Hearne,” Alan said, “I’d like to point out that the super-predator we captured and relocated today had already single-handedly wiped out several other species of dinosaurs on this island. I know you’d like us to study the amazingly advanced immune systems of these genetically engineered animals. But before we can even think of devoting our time to potential income- generating operations, we must stabilize this out-of-balance ecology. Otherwise, there won’t be any dinosaurs left to study.”

Hearne frowned. “Why can’t these operations be handled at the same time?”

“Some are,” Alan said. He looked away and muttered, “Which you’d know if you bothered to read those files you people like to shuffle so much.”

“Pardon?” Hearne asked.

Deborah smiled. “He was just asking me if Cook was already fixing our dinners. It’s been a long day and we’re starved.”

Alan nodded, grateful for Deborah’s powers of diplomacy. “As I said, some operations are already under way, but results will not come overnight. Research takes time.”

“Time’s not an issue,” Hearne said. “Money is. For that reason, we’ve scheduled a group of goodwill appearances for you over the next few weeks to help remind the general public—*and* our skittish investment groups—of all the good work you’re doing out here and the potential benefit for us all. The research into dinosaur immune systems alone could yield a hundred million in new medicines.”

Hearne slid a file across the table to Alan. Grimacing, the scientist reviewed the enclosed documents.

“I’m not agreeing to go—” Alan started.

“Orlando, Florida? Oh, cool!” Deborah exclaimed, glancing at the pages over Alan’s shoulder.

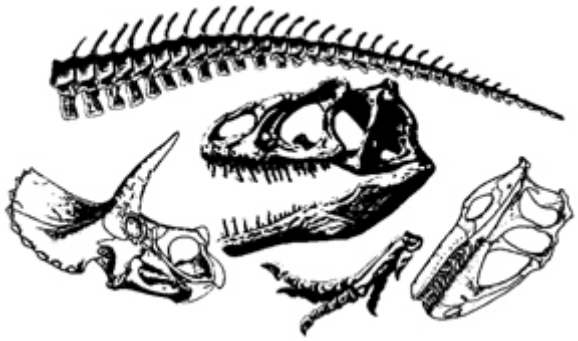
“But not for this,” Alan said. “What’s next? I get to appear on the celebrity version of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*”

Hearne smiled, breaking out a ballpoint to take notes. “Good idea. We could use the additional income. . . .”

CHAPTER 2

Eric Kirby couldn't believe what he was looking at. He'd seen amazing things in his thirteen years, but nothing quite like this. He sat at the author signing table at Mysterious Galaxy, a bookstore in San Diego. Outside it looked as if an endless line of people had shown up just to see him!

"The line's all the way around the block," said one of the owners: a thin, bearded man with glasses, named Jeff. He wandered through the crowded store with his wife, Mary Elizabeth, helping to keep the lines orderly.



Eric shook his head in disbelief as he signed yet another book. His mother sat beside him. Amanda Kirby put her hand on her son's shoulder.

"Did you hear that, honey?" Amanda asked.

Eric nodded, but he was too busy to answer. A whole family was gathered in front of his table, and every member wanted a signed copy of his book. His hand was actually starting to get sore and he was feeling light-headed with all the excitement and praise.

"So that's Christy with a Y, Alex not Alec, Tommy, Bobby, and Jim," Eric said. They all nodded happily.

To the youngest, Eric wrote, "Read and all your dreams will come true."

More fans arrived. Questions poured in.

A ten-year-old girl asked what it was like to see Compsognathus up close. She loved the little chicken-sized dinosaurs. An eight-year-old boy with freckles wanted to know what a T. rex smelled like. A ton of teenagers asked about raptors. An elderly couple wondered if any pre- historic marine life had been replicated on Isla Sorna.

Eric had to keep it brief because of the long lines, but he did his best to answer all the questions. When he had been lost for eight weeks on Isla Sorna, the only place on the planet where dinosaurs existed, he never once thought his experiences would help him to become a celebrity. But after appearing on *Good Morning America, Oprah,* and *60 Minutes,* he was having to come to terms with his new status.

"So when's the next book out?" a young redhead wearing a University of California sweatshirt asked.

That one took Eric by surprise. Sure, his publisher had been after him for a sequel, but he hadn't been asked by readers before.

"No sequels," his mother said. "Dealing with those things once was plenty, thanks."

Eric nodded. He actually did have more stories to tell, but he had promised Dr. Grant that he would not write about any of the research under way on the island.

Suddenly, a steady murmur moved through the crowd.

Jeff looked to the storefront window. "Something's going on outside."

A scream sliced through the crowd outside and the customers inside panicked.

Eric leaped onto the table so he could see over the window displays. A pale amber streak whipped down from above and seemed to attack someone on the street. Then a thing with a twenty-foot wingspan crashed through the heavy window and bowled over a display case.

It was a Pteranodon! One of the three that had flown from Isla Sorna when Eric had been airlifted from the island.

Screeee-eeeee!

Eric froze. He saw people hurling themselves through the broken window and more running wildly through the streets. Some snuck into the bagel shop or the chiropractor's

office next door, while others tried to reach their cars.

Two more Pteranodons circled outside. It was only a matter of time before one came down and snatched up a human with its talons, or tore at one with its long, sharp beak. Cars collided or went head to head as drivers veered off into opposing traffic to escape the flyers dive-bombing their windshields. Eric heard a screech of brakes and saw a Toyota run up the sidewalk and smash into a lamppost.

The Pteranodons shrieked in triumph, but then their tone changed. Their new cries were all too familiar to Eric. They had tired of games. Now they wanted to eat!

Eric had to do something. Everyone was staring at him. They wanted him to tell them what to do, how to survive. He couldn't. Looking into the eyes of the predator who had burst into the store, he felt powerless. All he could think of was the moment he had run from a creature just like this, the way it had caught him, dragging him high into the air, exerting absolute control over him.

The booksellers hurled hardcovers at the flyer's head, but were swept out of the way by the Pteranodon's strong wings. Eric's mother hauled him off the table and kicked it over, creating a barrier between them and the predator. But with a single leap it was over the table and on them.

This time, the scream came from Eric's lips.

Eric bolted forward in his chair, desperately gasping in terror.

"Honey?" his mother asked. She sat next to him on the plane, her warm eyes filled with concern.

"I'm okay," Eric said, reassuring himself as much as his mother. He looked down at his hands, which were *not* covered in scratches from whipping talons. He felt the chill of the air-conditioning vent from above, a coolness that was *not* from the flapping of terrible dark wings. The comforting scent of honey-roasted peanuts and coffee drifted to him. The slight vibration of the plane's engines tingled in his feet. He looked out the window and saw only soft blue-white clouds.

"Were you dreaming about the island?" Amanda asked.

Eric shook his head. She saw the way he was looking out the window and her breath caught in her throat.

"Them," she whispered.

Eric didn't look at her. There had been reported sightings of the flyers in South America, Britain, Texas—even Japan. But no one really knew where the flyers had gone. Even with satellite technology and a host of other tracking methods, the low-flying, winged reptiles had evaded every attempt to locate them.

"They fixed the birdcage," Amanda said. "Dr. Grant and his people, they fixed it. Once they track those things down, they'll put 'em back where they belong and that'll be the end of it. Everything can go back to normal."

"Yep," Eric said softly.

"Listen," Amanda said. "This whole thing in Orlando . . . it's not too late to call it off. We get off the plane; we get tickets back to Enid. I'll tell the publisher you were feeling sick. I was feeling sick. Whatever. I don't want you doing anything—"

"Are you Eric Kirby?"

Eric looked up suddenly. A kid a year or two younger than he stood in the aisle, a copy of Eric's book in his hands. He brushed soft blond hair out of his eyes and shifted his weight uncomfortably from one foot to the other. His face was round, his eyes wide and trusting. His RAPTORS RULE! T-shirt was too big, his jeans even roomier.

Eric heard his mom let out an exhausted breath. He turned to the newcomer. "That's me."

"I can't believe it!" the raptor-loving fan said. He held out his hand. "My name's Josh."

Eric shook his hand. "You liked the book?"

"I've read it, like, fifty times," Josh said. "What you did was incredible! Oh, man, I've got some questions, some stuff that I didn't see in the book. And—and I want you to sign it. Would you sign it?"

Amanda finally looked over. "Josh, honey, now's not really a good time—"

"It's okay," Eric said. He remembered the first time he'd met Dr. Grant, after carrying the scientist's book in his pocket for eight long weeks of dodging predators and trying to find a way home. The man had been gracious and kind, despite his own ordeal.

Now he knew why he was going through with the event in Orlando. There was no way he'd let people like this down.

Eric smiled. "I'm all yours, Josh. Ask away . . ."

CHAPTER 3

Alan Grant was met at the Orlando airport by an escort wearing khaki shorts, a white T-shirt, a Universal Studios baseball cap, and a toothy grin. The escort was in his late thirties and muscular, and had stubble on his cheeks and hair down to his shoulders. *Strange,* thought Alan. The man seemed rather scruffy for a theme-park employee. The escort also wore too much cologne. The heavy scent was overpowering, even in the company of the hundreds of other people meeting friends, loved ones, or business acquaintances.

TRICERATOPS

"Mr. Grant, pleasure to meet you," the escort said. "I'm Manly."

Alan nodded. "Unusual name."

"Believe me, I never heard the end of it when I was in school."

"And it's Dr. Grant. Or Alan."

"You bet."

They chitchatted about the weather as they went to pick up Alan's bags. Outside, Alan felt warm and overdressed in his tan slacks and flannel shirt. At least he had his lucky hat to protect him from the blinding light of the sun. Isla Sorna may have been a tropical island, but at least there were ocean breezes wafting in. Orlando was a land-locked oven seething with humidity.

Manly talked about the drought the area had been facing. And as they drove toward the park, Alan spotted signs everywhere imploring the rain to come: RAIN, RAIN, COME AGAIN, LET THIS BE THAT OTHER DAY!

"I don't miss the afternoon thundershowers," Manly said. "Lightning at three o'clock in the afternoon every day, all of us having to scramble to shut down the attractions and get people to where they can stay dry. But the area really does need the rain. There have been brush fires for days. No one knows if all of them have happened because it's so dry or if people are setting them. You hate to think such a thing of anyone, but folks have been caught doing it."

Alan nodded. "People are capable of just about anything."

All of Alan's baggage was in the trunk except for the portable computer that sat on his lap. Alan could already smell smoke from the woods on the right-hand side of the highway. Traffic on the Interstate slowed to a crawl.

"Huh," Manly said, noticing the laptop as Alan took it out of its case and examined it. "I don't mean to pry or anything, but there's a woman at the park who's really into dinosaurs and your kind of stuff. She said you hate computers."

"She's right," Alan said, shifting uncomfortably. He always felt weird at the thought of how much total strangers knew about his likes and dislikes. He never considered himself a public figure and certainly not a celebrity. Everything he did in the spotlight was to support his mission to protect and preserve the dinosaurs of Isla Sorna; no more, no less.

The silence told him that friendly, smiling Manly was waiting for something more.

Alan cleared his throat. "You see, I have to have some way of keeping watch on what's happening on the island, the progress of my team, and so on."

"Have you even turned it on yet?"

Alan frowned. "No."

“I’m really good with computers. You need any help, just let me know.” Manly nodded at the carpet of unmoving cars before them. “In fact, I’ll boot it up right now and help you sort through your directories and get you online if you want. That looks like a wireless.”

Alan put the computer away. “That’s all right. This traffic is aggravating enough.”

“Yep, one of the parts of Orlando they don’t mention in the tourist brochures.”

Traffic moved—eventually—and Manly found a nice classical station on the radio that was to Alan’s liking. They were twenty minutes away from the park when Manly spoke again.

“So what’s it like, making up dinosaurs and such?” he asked.

Alan was taken aback. “Excuse me?”

“Whoa!” Manly laughed. “Wasn’t trying to pry into company secrets or anything like that. Just some stuff I read about in the papers.”

“In the tabloids, you mean,” Alan said. “Right next to BIGFOOT’S GIRLFRIEND and ELVIS’S ALIEN CHILD.”

“Probably. Just sounded cool. Mix a little longneck with one of those armored dudes with the spiketail and see what you get.”

Alan shook his head. “Listen, I’m no fan of InGen’s genetic experiments. When I think of how their technology could have been applied to curing diseases, world hunger, you name it . . .”

Drawing a deep, long breath, Alan forced himself to relax. “In other words, I’ll admit it’s thrilling to some degree that dinosaurs again walk the earth, but it’s the last use that I would have thought of for that technology.”

“And this from a paleontologist?” Manly asked.

“Indeed. And all those fine minds, all the people who truly understood what InGen did, are gone now. Some lost on the first island, others at sea during the evacuation. Now it’s up to us to go back from their results to try to piece together what they did.”

“So you’re not averse to using InGen technology for what you see as the greater good,” Manly said.

Alan's forehead furrowed. Signs for Universal Studios Florida had been cropping up for the last several minutes. His guide hadn't even gotten into the far-right lane so they could make their turn-off, despite the massive line of cars dangerously swerving around them to do exactly that. And his relaxed speech was sounding more formal now, his questions less like friendly chitchat and more like an *interview*.

"Manly, do you think you could show me some ID?" Alan asked casually. "You *do* work for Universal, right?"

The escort grinned. "Well, I'm sort of driving here, Dr. Grant. Not exactly a safe time to be digging around for my card. Are you sure this can't wait until we reach the park?"

Alan sighed. He withdrew a palm-sized cell phone and dialed the guest-services number Deborah had given him for the park.

"Dr. Grant, there you are!" the woman at the other end said. "We were worried sick when our escort missed picking you up at the airport."

"One moment," Alan said. He covered the phone. "So, do you come clean or do I give your description to my friend and have them pass it along to the police?"

Manly frowned and pulled into the far-right lane. An exit for the Universal Studios theme park came up and he took it.

"I should be there in a few moments," Alan said into the phone. "No worries."

He replaced the phone. "Do you mind telling me who you really are, or do I need to start guessing?"

"Manly Wilks, *International Examiner,*" the driver said.

"So you were the one who wrote those stories about Bigfoot and Elvis."

"No, I handle conspiracy theories. Use your computer. A basic search will tell you all you need to know."

"The only thing I need to know right now is why I shouldn't be pressing charges."

"It wouldn't stand," Manly said. "I never said I was your escort—I just told you I was there to take you to the park, and that's what I'm doing. No harm there."

Soon they were approaching Universal's main gates. Alan told Manly to pull over and they got his things.

Alan thought about the statements he had made to the reporter. “Do you have some recording device on you?”

“No need. I have a really good memory.”

“A good memory, Mr. Wilks?” Alan said. “You’re not the only one. Keep away from me.”

“The public’s got a right to know what you people are up to on that island,” Manly yelled as Alan walked away. “And I’m gonna be the one to tell ’em!”

“Right,” Alan muttered. “You and Bigfoot and Elvis.”

CHAPTER 4

Sawdust kicked into the air as Eric paced backstage at one of Universal's major presentation areas, this one decorated for a Wild West show.

Eric looked out at the crowd gathered for his presentation. The stadium seating was packed and camera operators were everywhere. It was Survivor Week at Universal Studios. Each day, famous people who'd had brushes with danger and high adventure had appeared and talked about their experiences. Today, it was his turn to talk about facing the dinosaurs of Isla Sorna.

PACHYCEPHALOSAURUS

Eric looked at his mother. "Where's Dr. Grant?"

Amanda smiled as she closed her cell phone. "Just breathe, honey. I've been coordinating with guest services. Dr. Grant's passed the main gates. He'll be here any time now."

The stage door opened and a tour guide ushered Alan Grant inside. Eric's face lit up as the scientist walked briskly toward him and unslung his travel bags from over his shoulder.

“Eric, Mrs. Kirby,” Alan mumbled with a short nod. He walked right past Eric and slammed his bags onto a table. “So, I imagine it’s time to submit ourselves to this unpleasant business. I suppose it could be worse, though I’m not exactly sure how.”

Alan tapped the corners of his mouth and regarded Eric with a forced and very fake smile. “I’m ready for my close-up.”

Eric turned to his mother, who was making a show of looking at the side of the tour guide’s head.

“Ma’am, is something the matter?” the dark-haired young tour guide asked Amanda.

“Just looking to see if Dr. Grant had chewed your ear off with whatever’s got him bothered this time,” Amanda said. “There’s always something, and usually, once you get him started—”

“Mom!” Eric exclaimed. His greatest dream was to one day return to Isla Sorna as an official and permanent part of the team studying dinosaurs. Whether or not that happened depended on Alan Grant thinking nice things about him.

Alan sighed. His shoulders slumped. “Your mother’s right, Eric. I was being rude. I just had a little sneak preview of the feeding frenzy out there and it wasn’t pleasant. My apologies.”

“Sorry you had a bad time,” Amanda said. “I kind of like dealing with the press. It can be fun.”

Alan held his hand out to Eric. “It’s good to see you without our lives being threatened, for once.”

Eric shook his hand, happy to see Alan’s face finally relax into a genuine smile. Then his mom and several stagehands led him and Alan to the stage. Alan looked back to Amanda in confusion.

“Aren’t you joining us?” he asked. “You were there, too.”

“I’m just the mom,” Amanda said with a shrug.

“But—”

She shook her head. “No one asked me.”

The “inquisition”—as Alan kept referring to it—started right after introductions and applause.

“Dr. Grant, how many people have you actually seen eaten by dinosaurs?” one reporter asked.

Another stood before he could answer. “How can you possibly justify risking more human lives with your work on Isla Sorna?”

A third rose quickly. Alan’s gaze narrowed; he tensed at the sight of this scruffy reporter in khaki shorts. “What about reports of secret production of human-dinosaur hybrids to be used by the military?”

“Good morning, Mr. Wilks. What a *surprise* to see you here,” Alan said.

Behind the reporter, Josh Newman was bouncing on his heels, his hand raised high. Eric gave him a little wave, which made his young fan grab his dad’s arm and shake it excitedly.

“Oh, boy,” Eric sighed.

A studio official leaped before the guests. “Everyone, I’d like to advise you at this time to hold your questions until the question-and-answer period. This is not a press conference. This is a chance for people with an interest in dinosaurs—and stories of survivors—to hear firsthand about the wonders and dangers of dinosaurs.”

Alan turned to Eric and muttered, “Well, it looks like we’ve got some really dangerous predators to face this time.”

Eric shrugged. “I could go first.”

With a laugh, Alan gestured that Eric could have the honor. “If you want to feed yourself to the lions ahead of me, who am I to say no?”

Wow, Eric thought. *This stuff really bothers him.*

Eric quickly recounted his adventures on Isla Sorna, commanding the stage like a polished professional. His mother grinned at him proudly from the wings, and Alan watched him closely. The scientist actually looked impressed—and a shade more relaxed when his turn came to chat about his experiences on the first and second islands, and about the research center he’d established on Isla Sorna.

Then the inevitable question-and-answer period began. Studio representatives walked around with hand-held microphones and chose who would get to speak. The first half dozen questions were from young fans of Eric's. But Josh, who was turning red and practically rocking the bleachers as he bounced up and down with his hand in the air, was still waiting for his chance to speak.

Then a nine-year-old brunette with glasses and a glowing smile was handed the mike. "My name's Alexa. My question's for Dr. Grant. Would you talk about the dinosaur eggs they found in Argentina?"

Alan grinned. "Now that's the kind of question I've been hoping to address!"

Eric smiled as he took in the excitement in Alan's eyes.

"What makes this find extraordinary is that this is the first time fossilized dinosaur skin has ever been found," Alan said. "The embryos within these eggs are perfectly preserved. There's no guesswork involved here. No finishing incomplete DNA sequences, as was the case with the InGen dinosaurs. These baby Titanosaurs may prove to be one of the most important discoveries in the history of paleontology."

Eric noted a slight sadness creeping onto the scientist's face. He could easily guess why—Alan hadn't been a part of this groundbreaking discovery. Alan had said countless times that true paleontology is done in the rock, but now he had no time for the digs that had once been his entire life.

The mike was finally passed to the very excited Josh. "This question is for Eric! Do you think Isla Sorna will ever be safe for regular people to visit? Like Jurassic Park was supposed to be in the beginning?"

"Absolutely," Eric said without hesitation. "That's the whole point of Dr. Grant's—"

"Now hold on," Alan said, interrupting him. "That is hardly the point of our research on Isla Sorna. I have been, and always will be, appalled at the idea of non-scientists being anywhere near these dangerous creatures. This is about preservation, containment, and gaining knowledge that will help mankind. It is *not* about surrendering to short-sighted commercial interests."

Eric drew back as if he'd been struck. "But, Dr. Grant, not all species of dinosaurs are dangerous and you know it. I mean, it's like some dogs are dangerous, but not all of them. And it depends on how they're brought up."

“Dino-Pets,” Alan said with pure disgust. “Have you trademarked that one yet? If not, you should. Especially with the world listening.”

Alan glanced at the audience and the reporters, who were loving every minute of the disagreement. He stood and unhooked his lapel microphone. “The past teaches us nothing. Not even to those of you who need to learn the most.”

Eric was stunned as Alan left the stage, a handful of reporters chasing after him.

CHAPTER 5

That night, seven winged forms flew over Universal Studios. They were Pteranodons: three adults and four young who had flown away from the island that had been the adults' home—and their prison.

The Elder trailed behind the two other adults—his daughter and her mate. By the pale moonlight he studied the bright crimson markings along the strong, powerful wings of the flyer who had fought and won the right to be with the Elder's daughter. The Elder thought of him as Fire because he looked like the fiery dawn. Her markings were blue like the waves and gray like the rocky shore. She was Flood.

PTERANODON

The children of Fire and Flood spread out before their parents as the group soared beneath the clouds. The Elder didn't approve of allowing the young ones to fly ahead of their parents, but Fire and Flood liked to keep their four children where they could see them.

The group had been searching for some time now. Not one knew for certain what they hoped to find, but each shared a longing for something, perhaps a place, that would end their restlessness and give them peace. The Elder, Flood, and Fire all knew to avoid the busy and dangerous places of the Keepers, the small but smart and dangerous prey that had somehow kept them trapped for so many years.

The children, though, were fearless. Or simply foolish. They hadn't learned caution. The smaller flyers were drawn by anything interesting and new. Bright lights, odd sounds. Before their last long crossing over water, the Elder had been forced to restrain two of them on the side of a mountain. The soft brown of his wings had hidden them well from the shining metal beasts of the Keepers, which had sped along a winding path just below the flyers. The Elder's plain brown body had blended with his surroundings, and they went unnoticed.

The most troublesome of the four youths was the flyer with the bright golden tinge on his wings. Goldie's curiosity was boundless, and that was dangerous right now. In this new place, it was harder than ever before to avoid the Keepers.

The land was flat and hostile. They had been forced to hide by day and hunt by night, using the strange lights of the Keepers to guide them.

On this night, the flyers had gathered around a small lake. Lights and sudden loud sounds made the Keepers cry out. The flyers stayed high enough to avoid being seen, while their vision allowed them to scan the ground far below for prey.

Suddenly, a high whistling rose from below. The Elder was the first to hear it. He shrieked a warning to Fire and Flood, but his frantic cry did no good. Explosions sounded all around them, and suddenly the sky was alive with bursts of blinding color, pinwheels of bright light, and falling stars.

The flyers panicked. Two of the children smacked into each other, their hard skulls thwacking together in the night. When they fell away, their sharp claws barely avoided each other's wings.

Goldie was heading right for one of the quickly fading light displays. The Elder *cawww*ed a warning, as did Goldie's parents and brothers. It did no good. A second later, another explosion came and the light enveloped the young flyer.

"Meep!" Goldie cried as his wing was set aflame. Then, in panic and fear, the young, curious flyer dropped from the sky.

The remaining six flyers dove for him, heedless of the explosions around them. The Elder caught a downdraft and soared toward the golden-winged Pteranodon, catching him on the back of his own, much wider wings. He felt Goldie sliding off and struggled not to drop him. Then Fire and Flood were above him. Flood's claws caught Goldie as he tumbled free, and the group sped downward, landing close to a small isolated pool in the vast compound of their enemy.

Goldie was drenched in the water and the flames fizzled out. The other six gathered around the wounded, shaking flyer, prepared to defend him with their lives.

The Keepers had done this.

Until—and if—Goldie was able to fly once more, the group would need food. Shelter.

This place would be theirs.

CHAPTER 6

Eric was in a miserable mood when he woke the next morning. All the hard stuff was over. The book signings, the meet-and-greets, the television interviews, and the evening spent with the winner of the "Have Dinner with a Survivor!" contest—all of it was behind him now. Now it was time to spend a couple of days relaxing and enjoying the attractions at Universal. But all he could think about was the unhappy look Alan had given him during their talk.

He had breakfast in the hotel restaurant with his mother. She took one look at him and knew exactly what was the matter. Her gaze narrowed and she shook her head.

"I know we owe Dr. Grant a lot," Amanda said. "I'll never deny that. But he was in a rotten mood when he got here yesterday and he didn't have any right to take it out on you."

"He didn't," Eric said, pushing his eggs around on his plate and not eating a bite.

"You said what you thought. What you believe in. Right?"

Eric held his head up with one hand. He hadn't gotten a lot of sleep. "I dunno. That whole thing about dinosaurs for pets, that wasn't what I was getting at. You know, 'Hi, this is Rudy, my raptor buddy!' Duh, like that would ever happen. It wasn't what I meant."

“Exactly,” Amanda said. Her cell phone went off. She snapped it open, checked the incoming number, and held it out to Eric. “It’s for you.”

Eric took the phone.

“How you doin’, sport?”

It was his dad! For the first time since taking the stage yesterday, Eric perked up. He told his dad about how amazing the trip had been.

“Wish I could be there with ya,” Paul Kirby said. “But you know Enid. Somebody’s gotta hold the fort down.”

Eric smiled. His father’s hokey expressions always cracked him up. “Yeah, Dad. Hold the fort down. You never know when it might just up and fly away!”

Paul laughed. “Exactly. And in Enid, we can’t afford much of a fort as it is.”

By the time the call was done, Eric felt a hundred times better. He handed the phone back to his mom. “You always know the right thing to cheer me up.”

“Hey, I’m Supermom. It’s what I do.” The cell phone rang again. She checked the number, said, “Uh-uh,” and turned off the ringer. “That Hollywood agent again. The one who wants you to do TV commercials and all that wacky stuff.”

Eric thought of what Alan would say if he started doing product endorsements. The book was one thing. It had been a way of dealing with the emotional fallout from what he had gone through on the island. But running around with fake dinosaurs chasing him and holding up a soft drink after he’d escaped? There was no way he’d exploit and trivialize what he had gone through like that.

“Not interested,” Eric said.

Amanda smiled. “Not a problem.”

A man walked past in a familiar-looking hat. Eric sprang to his feet—then sighed when he realized it wasn’t Alan. Amanda saw the whole thing. “Eric.”

“I just wish I could talk to him again, that’s all,” Eric said.

“You and me both.”

Eric shook his head. “That’s not what I mean. He’s going back today. I want to fix things.”

“You don’t have anything to fix,” Amanda said. “You don’t have anything to be sorry for. Not a single thing.”

Eric left another message for Alan at the scientist’s hotel, then let his mom talk him into doing the “tourist thing.” They were just about to board the boat for the *Jaws* ride when Eric saw Josh Newman racing toward him.

“Eric! Eric, over here!” Josh called.

“Your adoring public,” Amanda said. “Want me to run interference for you? I’ve faced raptors. I think I can take him.”

Eric laughed. “It’s fine.”

Josh joined them on the boat, his dad staying behind. They’d already done the ride twice since coming here.

“So that thing yesterday with you and Dr. Grant, what’s up with that?” Josh asked. “He really seemed ticked off!”

Amanda rubbed her forehead. “Josh, this might not be—”

“He had a rough flight,” Eric said. “No big deal.”

“Oh,” Josh said. “So you think one day, they really would let people like me go to the island? Or maybe, y’know, the next time you get to go, could I come along?”

“That’s not up to me,” Eric said. He wished Josh would just drop it. What did Alan Grant need with some kid like Josh running around the island, getting in the way when he was trying to get his work done?

The boat left the dock and Bill, the helmsman, smiled a little too broadly as he took them out. The young, good-looking Asian American man made a show of appearing nervous.

“Wow, you guys are packed in like sardines,” Bill said, the sunlight sparkling in his bright green eyes. “Not to make you feel like fish food or anything. I wonder if we should’ve used a bigger boat. . . .”

“This is so cool,” Josh said. “Just wait until we get to the end. There’s all these explosions and the coast guard shows up and everything just goes crazy. . . .”

The water was a little choppy and a strong breeze blew in from the east as Bill got the ship up to a leisurely speed. Storefronts that looked exactly like the ones from the *Jaws* movie lined the docks of the simulated harbor.

“I want to assure everyone that I’m qualified to pilot this ship,” Bill said. “I’m not *actually* the captain. He got eaten—um, called away, I mean. A little emergency, these things happen. Believe me, we at Amity Beach Waterways Tours are all about safety first, so don’t any of you worry about those shark rumors. We just get dolphins sometimes, like harmless ol’ Flipper, yep, that’s it. . . .”

Eric grinned. The actor taking them through the waterway was really into it. Someone gasped, then laughed and pointed as bits and pieces of savaged clothing drifted by either side of the boat.

The boat rounded a curve, and a half-sunk, flaming tour boat came into view.

Bill gasped. “Whoa, whoa, whoa—that’s not good.” He put his hand over his mouth. “That’s the boat that went before us. What could have—”

The captain’s words were cut off by the infamous first notes of the *Jaws* theme. People gasped as the giant shark burst from the water with such force that everyone on the left side of the boat was soaked! Bill grabbed the wheel and steered them clear as the predator sank beneath the choppy water.

“Did I mention I used to be a Navy Seal?” Bill asked. “No? Good, ’cause I wasn’t. But if it makes any of you feel better, just pretend and maybe we’ll get through this!”

Beside Eric, Josh laughed his head off.

From somewhere close, pelicans *cawww*ed. The sun was in Eric’s eyes as he saw one of the birds rise over an Amity facade and lazily drift their way. Only—the pelican didn’t look right, somehow. The wings were way longer than they should have been, and there was a large spike rising from the back of its skull. . . .

“No,” Eric whispered.

The boat turned and Eric got a better look at the flying creature as it dropped from the sky. It was bigger than he thought at first. Five or ten times bigger.

This was *no* pelican. In fact, it was not a true creature of the natural world, not anymore.

As one of the adult InGen Pteranodons screeched and dove directly at them, Eric knew exactly what it was—his nightmare had come to life!

CHAPTER 7

This was *not* part of the show. And Eric knew it.

He screamed and struggled to get out of his seat as the full-grown male Pteranodon blurred through the sky, set on a dive-bombing course for the little boat.

"We've gotta get away!" Eric yelled, his fear overtaking him.

The "captain" of the *Jaws* boat ride hadn't seen the threat. Bill put his hands out, attempting to stay in character while he tried to calm what he thought was an overexcited young customer. "Hey, don't worry. I'm a trained professional—we'll be fine!"

Then he looked over his shoulder at the water and made a broad, theatrical gulp as the drumming pulse of the *Jaws* theme grew louder and more insistent.

BLACK PTERANODON

"Not the shark! Up there, up there!" Eric yelled, jerking his head at the sky as he grabbed the metal bar in his lap. They were trapped. The safety bars held them firmly in place.

Amanda looked up first—and screamed.

A couple of people looked up, then laughed and screamed, too, thinking it was all part of the fun. A few saw the real threat as it *cawww*ed a final time and swooped in for

its lightning-fast attack.

It went for Bill, the one person on the boat who could be grabbed and lifted clean off. The actor turned at the sound of the flying reptile's last shriek and went off balance, slipping on the slick deck. The great rear claws reaching for him missed. Instead, the Pteranodon's wing struck Bill's skull and the actor fell over the side, sinking like a stone beneath the water.

"No!" Eric shouted.

Everyone saw it now. Panic engulfed the passengers on the doomed little boat as the Pteranodon swung high into the sky like a pen-dulum and turned gracefully to dive at them a second time.

The water beside the boat churned and Bill exploded from its surface. Gasping and spitting, he stared in wide-eyed horror as the Pteranodon came at him once more. Tearing his gaze away from the terrifying creature, Bill shouted, "The release for the bars! It's on the right-hand side!"

Then he dove beneath the water, barely avoiding the grasping claws of the flyer as it skidded like a stone across the blue surface and rose into the sky again.

Everyone was struggling now, and all the screams were real. Some didn't believe this was real—*It can't be happening, not to me*—while others were so terrified they couldn't form a single thought beyond *Flee, flee, flee!*

"What do we do?" Josh hollered, grabbing Eric's arm so hard that it hurt. "What do we do?"

Eric felt paralyzed. He was vaguely aware of his mother digging through her purse with wildly shaking hands, frantically hissing, "Come on, come on, I know you're in here, come on . . ."

Bill rose from the water, gasping, just as the Pteranodon went for him yet again, this time opening wide gashes in his shoulders and tearing his shirt as he dove below the water. The boat continued moving away from the fallen helmsman, following its own preprogrammed course.

Cawwwhhhrrr! The Pteranodon soon abandoned Bill and whipped around, turning its crimson wings in a magnificent arc as it set its sights on the boat. The trapped passengers looked ripe and ready for the taking, unlike this elusive and frustrating prey in the water.

“The button, the button,” Eric whispered. He craned his neck and saw the release at the front of the boat, near the wheel. Bright and shining and silver, it had to be the release for the metal bars restraining the passengers.

Eric looked around for something to throw. *Shoes,* he thought*, shoes would be perfect,* but they were all crammed in too tightly for anyone to get their shoes off in time. He snatched a camera bag from the webbed doodad holder attached to the back of the chair in front of him and hurled it at the button.

He missed. Looking over his shoulder, he saw the Pteranodon sailing in fast and heard it *cawww*ing in triumph. Fear nearly paralyzed him; then he heard his mom holler, “Gotcha!”

He snatched his mom’s purse just as she grabbed something out of it. Then he hurled the purse at the button. It slapped against the hard plastic next to the button. *Missed again!*

There was no more time. The Pteranodon was on them, its sharp beak snapping, the golden sun lighting its eyes like wildfires at midnight.

Amanda raised her hand and sprayed something at the creature’s face. It hissed and veered off course, jerking abruptly upward and away, the breeze of its wings ruffling Eric’s hair. The Pteranodon wobbled as it sliced just over the surface of the water, pulling up sharply to avoid hitting a small atoll in the lake. It flew beneath the low bridge that was coming up.

“Bug spray,” Amanda said, almost out of breath. “*Nailed* him!”

The prerecorded voices of “coast guard officials” hollered at the helmsman to get his boat out of the area as they passed beneath a covered bridge. Eric grabbed at his shoe, trying to get it loose so he’d have something else to throw at the release. He smelled something like gasoline in the water.

“What is that smell?” Eric demanded as he tried to work his shoe loose. Ahead, the Pteranodon had circled and was heading back their way.

“Fuel spill,” Josh bleated. “On the ride, there’s a fuel spill, and then—”

The fake shark attacked as the Pteranodon once more flew straight at the group. A sudden series of explosions rocked the boat. Eric could feel the heat.

With a squawk of fear and alarm, the Pteranodon veered off course and pulled up so fast it smacked the bridge and dropped down hard near the mechanical shark. It whipped about in fear at the sight of the creature.

"It thinks the shark's a Megalodon or something!" Josh cried.

Eric knew that during the age of dinosaurs, Pteranodons had a poor sense of smell, but incredible vision. These InGen versions might or might not share those traits. One way or another, the flyer was so startled it didn't realize the shark wasn't real. It didn't seem to smell the plastic and steel rather than juicy flesh.

"Mom, when you quit smoking, you didn't *really* quit, did you?" Eric asked.

Amanda was frantic. "Eric, you're on me about this *now*?"

"Do you have your lighter?"

With trembling hands, she pointed at the bag Eric had tossed. The contents were spilled all over. He spotted the lighter about a foot from the bag, next to his mom's cell phone.

Just then, his right sneaker came loose. He tossed it at the silver release—and hit it dead on! The bar slowly eased upward and he was free. Some people dove over the side; others crouched and covered their heads. Eric scrambled ahead and grabbed for the lighter. The Pteranodon screeched as it flapped its wings and launched itself at the boat again.

The boat cleared the covered bridge as Eric fired up the lighter and locked the flame in the on position in one motion. Then he tossed it at the patch of water just ahead that smelled of strange chemicals.

A fiery burst rose just as the Pteranodon flew overhead, talons reaching for Josh. It screeched and veered away, sailing off toward the buildings beyond the Amity pier.

The fake shark appeared a final time, and the flames upon the water burned higher and brighter, searing the plastic monster.

The boat was nearly at the dock, but half the passengers didn't wait. In a panic, they jumped and swam for shore.

Eric and his mother stayed in the boat. But the instant it stopped, Eric sprang out and raced ahead of his mother.

“We’ve got to find Dr. Grant!”

CHAPTER 8

Carrying his travel bag and laptop, Alan Grant had told his driver that he would meet him by guest services at eleven sharp. That had been an hour ago. Now he had only a few more minutes to find Eric in the park and say goodbye.

He had gotten in very late last night, too late to return Eric's messages, and he didn't want to leave things unsettled between them.

"Dr. Grant!"

Alan's shoulders tightened. He knew that voice—Manly Wilks—and he had no intention of stopping for it. When he heard running, he knew that Manly had no intention of giving up. The reporter was beside him in moments, holding up a small digital video camera.

"So, Dr. Grant, how about one last statement on the rumors that a secret group of international foreign interests is paying you to produce bio-weapons for them?" Manly said.

Alan didn't take the bait. He knew the reporter would love for him to overreact the way he had yesterday. "Mr. Wilks, tell me, how can I miss you if you won't go away?"

"Now, Dr. Grant, is that any way to speak to a card-carrying member of the free press?" Manly asked. "Without the kind of publicity you came here to get, you probably wouldn't know what to do with—"

A horrible scream came from a dozen yards behind the men. They looked back and saw a nightmarish vision—huge creatures swooping down from the skies, trying to snatch up men, women, and children in their great claws.

Pteranodons. There were close to half a dozen, and at least three were the size of adults.

Manly aimed his digital camera as one of the creatures soared right over his head. He spun, capturing its flight toward a doomed couple. The woman tried to run, but was grabbed by the flyer.

The Pteranodons sailed over the park's re- creations of "San Francisco," "Hollywood," and "New York," snatching tourists and guides, hauling them high into the air and dropping them into the central lagoon.

"It's . . . it's a coordinated assault," Alan whispered.

A young flyer shrieked as it flew in fast at Alan, its claws twitching and ready. Blue and red spots dotted its wings. The scientist knew what he had to do—hold his ground, wait until the last second, then duck—but he was frozen!

Manly grabbed Alan's laptop and swung it by the strap at the Pteranodon's head. It connected with a sharp crack and the flyer wobbled off, then fell skidding into the boardwalk. It crawled onto all fours. Standing on its hind legs, the young flyer faced into the wind with outspread wings. A single leap and stroke of its wings raised it into the air.

Manly caught it all on his digital recorder. "So, talk to me. What did you mean by 'a coordinated assault'?"

Alan stared in shock at the reporter. The man barely registered the danger he was in. He showed no compassion for the people around him. The last time Alan had faced anything so single-minded, it had been on the island. In fact, Manly seemed to have the same terrible determination as a T. rex!

“Come on, Grant. I just saved your life. Now you’ve got to give me that exclusive!”

Turning from the reporter in disgust, Alan raced toward the closest cluster of people. They were panicking, running around without thought.

“Get inside!” Alan hollered. “Head for any of these buildings and take cover!”

Only a handful listened to him. He saw Amanda, Eric, and another boy running his way. Another young flyer dropped toward them. This one had a pair of silver streaks that looked like lightning bolts. Alan pointed at the outdoor arcade near the small group.

“Use anything you can get your hands on!” Alan yelled.

In the confusion, the group snatched up a handful of baseballs from a target toss game and lobbed them at the Pteranodon as it landed near them. With a sort of glee, the animal darted and danced out of the way of each ball, as if it were anticipating exactly what throw each of the humans would make.

“Oh, man, I suck at this game!” the boy next to Eric yelled.

Eric grabbed a hula hoop from another section of the arcade and raced at the flyer. The Pterano-don was almost as startled as Alan and Amanda. It sprang at Eric at the last minute, but Eric threw the hoop and dove out of the way.

The hula hoop dropped down over the angry adolescent Pteranodon’s head, pinning its great wings to its sides. It tried to launch itself forward, wobbled, and fell with a shriek to the sidewalk.

Within seconds, the hoop restraining the adolescent was ready to break. It wouldn’t hold the creature for long.

“Run!” Alan hollered. He checked over his shoulder and spun quickly, scouting for any safe haven. The heat was terrible, the sun harsh and glaring. Sweat poured off him as he sprinted toward the entrance to a large building housing the Earthquake attraction.

Manly ran with him, coolly shooting his every move with the camera.

Alan heard screams and saw more people being herded toward the side of the lagoon, while others were dropped in from above. Boats lined the harbor, and many people were swimming toward them and grabbing hold to stay afloat.

“My dad!” the boy with Eric yelled. “We’ve got to find my dad!”

He was about to break from the group when Eric grabbed his arm and hauled him inside the attraction with the others. A full-grown flyer came racing toward them, hissing as they got inside and slammed the double doors in the creature's angry face.

CHAPTER 9

The adolescent Pteranodon stalked from one end of the boat to the other. His wings bore two silver streaks like lightning. He hissed and snapped at the frightened Keepers clinging to the craft. They screamed and darted into the water in terror.

Lightning's stomach rumbled. Feeding time had been so long ago, and he was hungry. He gave a pleading look to his mother, who circled overhead. She raised her beak and soared off. He knew how things were and that should have been enough: they didn't know how long they would be in this place, and the food would have to last.

YOUNG PTERANODON

All he wanted was a nibble. A morsel. The innards of one or two screaming Keepers would do. He'd make them small ones, even . . .

He looked down at the prey. The Keepers were frightened, confused, and angry. They didn't like their new position. Lightning couldn't have cared less. The Keepers were just meat to him. And he needed a little snack. . . .

He caught the gaze of his brother Spike. Trip looked over, too. A few discreet signals passed between them. Spike and Trip suddenly kicked up a ruckus, drawing the attention

of their parents and giving Lightning time enough to launch himself at one of the Keepers in the lagoon. He chose a young one, a plump little morsel.

Cahhhrrrr!

The great cry startled Lightning so badly that he missed his target, slapped the water, and took to the air with shuddering wings. His father dove down and screamed in his face. Trip's clumsy display and Spike's angry hopping and squawking hadn't been enough of a diversion. Fire spat at all three of his sons. He wanted them gone until nightfall. Out of his sight.

Lightning looked to his mother, who would not return his gaze.

He had just wanted to grab a snack! He exchanged looks with the embarrassed Trip and the always seething Spike.

They'd miss all the fun if the elders changed their minds and started feasting early.

Unless, of course, they made some fun of their own.

CHAPTER 10

Eric helped Alan, his mother, and the reporter to barricade the door. He took in the great theater lobby with its sepia-toned photographs of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.

“There could be other ways in,” Eric said. “We have to make this place secure.”

Josh nodded at a podium. “The tour guide usually stands there and tells everyone they’re gonna be extras in a disaster movie. We’d be running around for our lives. I think we could do that—what do you think

PTERANODON

Eric noticed the reporter recording Josh’s frightened, desperate statement. He nudged Alan, who led the protesting reporter away from the lad.

“We’re good,” Amanda said. “The doors are secure.”

“Anyone have a phone?” Alan asked. “No? We need to find one. Look for an office.”

Josh pointed at the three doors across from them. “We’ll have to go through there to start with.”

Everyone followed as Josh led them through the closest door. The next room was long and narrow, with a projection screen facing them. A film with Charlton Heston was

playing. Behind the screen, crimson curtains stretched down to the floor. Ducking under the curtains, the group entered a movie set with an escalator that rose against a blue backdrop and let out into nothing, and a three-story-high facade of a large building's destroyed stairwell.

Josh pointed at doors that led to "employees only" corridors. The hum and thrum of machinery dully echoed through the walls. The group walked through several corridors until Alan stopped to look at something tacked to the wall.

"It's a map," Alan said. "All the backstage routes are here." He traced a circuitous route on the map. "If we get to here and go down this way, we'd only have to be on the boardwalk for a short stretch; then we can get into this Italian restaurant. Plenty of food and water. Everything we'd need, probably for as long as it takes. First aid is close to there, too."

They kept going, still looking for an office with a phone as they made their way toward Alan's chosen destination.

"You know a lot about this place," Eric said.

Josh shrugged. "I've been here every summer the last three years running. Probably drives my dad crazy. He's not like your dad, though. He's cool."

Eric was taken aback, but he said nothing, reminding himself of all Josh was going through right now. "So why'd you come again?"

"To meet you."

A sound came from around the far corner. It might have been footsteps.

"Everyone—quiet!" Alan hissed.

Only Josh moved forward. "Dad?"

The sound came again.

"Dad!" Josh yelled.

Amanda grabbed him and clamped her hand over his mouth. "Not a good idea."

But it was too late. An adolescent flyer that stood as tall as Alan rounded the turn and stalked into view. His beet-red wings fluttered and he hissed at the humans. Alan snatched the map off the wall as the group turned and ran.

Cawwwrrrhhh!

The flyer raced after them, his wings scraping along both sides of the narrow corridor. Alan had no time to check the map as he led the group from one corridor to another; he hoped against hope that he was taking them in the right direction.

At the far end of the corridor, Alan saw a door. The echoing mechanical sounds intensified, and the walls seemed to vibrate.

"Wait!" Josh called. "Dr. Grant, not there!"

But there was nowhere else to go. Alan shoved the door open and almost stumbled as he ran onto a narrow ledge on one side of a subway tunnel. The ledge shuddered and the ceiling shattered. An empty subway car to his right surged upward as one ahead of it tilted dramatically and sank.

The others followed Alan as he pointed to another door at the far end of the ledge. The noise was deafening, and he gasped as the roof caved in on the opposite side. A propane tanker truck bulleted toward the stalled tram and was stopped by a steel beam. The impaled truck burst into flame as the small group raced on, the flames licking the area just behind them, narrowly avoiding the flyer hot in pursuit.

They passed stairs where a flood of water came rushing down. Eric slipped and the flyer soared at him. Amanda grabbed her son, just as the wall of water slammed into the creature. Then they made their escape out the opposite door!

Wet shoes sliding, the group raced down the corridor.

"This is it!" Alan yelled gleefully. "Those doors up ahead are the rear entrances of the gift shops down the street."

"This is fantastic!" Manly said, focusing his camera as the soaked flyer burst through the door behind them.

They raced down the narrow hallway, the flyer gaining on them. Eric knew they weren't going to be able to reach the corridor's end, a scant hundred feet away. He grabbed at a door to his left and nearly cried out with relief when it opened.

"This way, come on!" Eric yelled.

"No, no, no!" Josh hollered. "The next one. The next one!"

Eric saw the door up ahead but had no idea if it would be locked.

He went for it.

"Eric!" his mother yelled. He felt her desperate grab for the back of his shirt.

The door twenty feet ahead was open. Eric darted in, the others right behind him. The flyer slammed against the door as Alan tried to close it. He shoved with all his weight, but it wasn't enough. Amanda and Manly joined him, pushing hard, but it was just a matter of time before the Pteranodon pushed the door open and burst through. It screeched wildly.

"Ponchos," Josh yelled, racing for the shop's far wall. "Rain ponchos!"

The store they had entered sold baseball bats for engraving. Eric snatched up bats and passed them to Alan, Manly, and Amanda while Josh tore open the bags containing ponchos.

Eric heard his mother scream as the flyer shoved the door open wide, sending her and the two men stumbling back.

Josh tossed Eric a handful of opened ponchos with one hand and simultaneously dropped a poncho over the flyer's head with the other. The Pteranodon launched itself dead ahead in its fury, and Eric yanked Josh out of its way.

The flyer collided with a display and went down in a tangle of clothing and memorabilia. Eric tossed the remaining ponchos over the flyer's head. Blinded and stunned, it sank to the floor in submission.

They stared, chests heaving, at the fallen creature for several long moments of silence.

"That was fun," Eric said.

"Fun?" Josh gave him a strange "you're weird" sort of look. "Uh . . . sure."

Eric swallowed uneasily. The rush of adrenaline was something he'd missed since spending those eight weeks outwitting the dinosaurs on Isla Sorna. But Josh wouldn't understand that. Then again, who would? Outsmarting huge creatures that wanted to eat you was not exactly part of the average kid's daily routine.

Manly spoke up. "What if we . . . I dunno . . . took the flyer with us?"

Alan grimaced. “Always looking for the angle, aren’t you? The next story, nothing else. ‘Fearless Reporter Captures Fierce Pteranodon, Countless Lives Saved!’ That should get you on *60 Minutes,* don’t you think?”

Manly looked away.

“We should tie him up or something,” Amanda said. She reached for the flyer and its beak swiveled her way sharply, ripping through the ponchos. Then it sagged. It was still disoriented, but any minute it could become a major threat again.

“We move,” Alan said. “Now.”

CHAPTER 11

Alan led the silent, fearful group into the sunlight. They had picked up baseball bats from the shop and walked quickly and quietly down the boardwalk, staying as close to the buildings as possible. Some flyers circled silently, while others maintained their careful watch over their prey in the lagoon.

Suddenly, Josh stopped.

"My dad," he whispered as he stepped out of the buildings' shadows. "I can see my dad in the lagoon!"

Eric quieted the boy, grabbing his arm and steering him back to the shadows.

"We can't just leave him," Josh whispered. "Come on, Eric. What do we do?"

"Whatever Dr. Grant says," Eric said.

"Come on," Alan urged. The scientist knew that a Pteranodon's greatest asset was its incredibly sharp vision, not its sense of smell or hearing. But they were not dealing with creatures from the Dinosaur Age, over sixty-five million years ago. These had been created by InGen's genetic engineers. They were larger and heavier, and—unlike the Pteranodons of the Mesozoic—these flyers had *teeth* in their beaks.

The group stopped at the end of the block, hugging the building. They had to cross two dozen feet of open space to reach the Italian restaurant, and no one knew if the

doors would be open. Others might have taken refuge there already and locked the place down tight.

Alan knew he had to create some kind of distraction so the others could make the dangerous crossing, but there was nothing he could use to draw the attention of the flyers—except himself.

He was about to step into the light and race the opposite way, yelling and screaming, when Eric silently broke away and raced across the gap. He reached cover just as a flyer turned his way.

Flattened against the shadowed wall, Eric remained still. When the flyer looked away again, Eric tried the door. It was unlocked! With a wave, he signaled the group to come on over.

Because the others had seen how Eric had safely crossed the gap, they were less afraid to follow. They waited until the Pteranodon was distracted and looking elsewhere. Then they braved the gap after him.

They darted inside the restaurant and bolted the door behind them.

Alan surveyed the empty restaurant's wide glass windows and shook his head. "This place isn't safe. Everyone, let's get what we can and move on to the first-aid station."

Eric took two steps.

"Except for you, young man," Alan said. "What you did just then—"

"No, let me," Amanda said. "Eric, what were you thinking? You could have gotten caught! That was crazy."

"Actually," Alan said, "I was going to mention it was incredibly brave. Thank you."

Amanda growled. "Encourage him. Perfect."

Josh stared at Eric with open admiration—for all of two seconds. Then the boy's expression darkened. "You knew I'd follow you."

"I was just—"

"Yeah, okay, whatever," Josh said. "We're safe, and my dad's not. You're a survivor all right."

Nearby, Manly grinned as he captured the scene with his digital camera.

In the kitchen, they found bottled water, sandwich meats, bread, and plenty of seafood. Eric pulled down a pair of large coolers and loaded them up with shrimp, scallops, and grouper packed with ice.

His mother stared at him, frowning.

"They like fish," Eric explained.

"So you want to draw them *to* us?" Amanda asked.

"They won't smell anything through the coolers," Eric said. "We might need it later."

"Or we might get a taste for seafood," Manly said.

At the first-aid station they found more supplies, but not what Alan had been hoping for.

"There's an animal show here," Alan said. "They must keep tranquilizer darts and knockout meds for emergencies."

"The show's on the other side of the lagoon," Josh said, his voice trembling. "I'm not seeing any of that stuff here."

Amanda found a phone in the station. She glued herself to it, trying and failing to get an outside line, then attempting to raise on-site security. The busy signals were interspersed with her snarls of frustration. Finding a working line was vital! Her cell phone would have come in handy at the moment, but too late she realized that she'd left it on the floor of the *Jaws* boat ride.

"Hey, you!" she called to the reporter.

"Manly," he told Amanda.

"Uh . . . right. Sure you are. Not that I care how manly you are. What I want to know is whether you might have somehow forgotten you were carrying a cell phone."

"Lady, my *name* is Manly. Manly Wilks, and my cell phone is in my car."

Alan watched the exchange and shook his head. “Don’t look at me, Mrs. Kirby. My laptop, which Mr. Wilks here managed to destroy, was the extent of my rendezvous with twenty-first-century technology.”

While the adults discussed the phone situation, Eric looked around for Josh. He noticed the boy sitting in a corner, his head down. Eric went to him.

“Y’know, when I was stranded on Isla Sorna,” Eric said, “I had to get myself through it—even when I was certain no one would rescue me for a long time.”

“How’d you do it?” asked Josh.

“I had to believe it would be okay—that everything would turn out just fine. Can you do that, too, Josh? Can you imagine your dad and everyone else down there getting out of this just fine? Same for all of us. Can you?”

Josh hesitated, then nodded. Still, there was something like betrayal in his eyes. Or maybe Eric was just being paranoid. Eric looked up to find Alan watching them from across the room. The scientist motioned Eric over.

Alan spoke very softly. “Eric, I just want you to know, about yesterday . . .”

Eric waited.

“I may have been a little cranky.” Alan took off his hat and fingered the brim. “You were wrong, but you didn’t deserve to be treated so shabbily. That’s all.”

Grinning, Eric said, “Maybe you can make it up to me on my next visit to the island.”

“You never give up, do you?” Alan asked with a slight smile.

“Never.”

On the other side of the first-aid station, Amanda hung up the phone and raised the map she had been studying. “This phone is useless. But I’ve got another idea. Come here.”

The group gathered around her. Amanda pointed out a small communications backup room on the map. It was in the very building where they were, which also housed the Kongfrontation ride.

“If we head there, we should be able to reach the outside world,” she said. “Short-wave radio, satellite, PA systems—all that stuff, I’d wager.”

“A working computer,” Manly said. He looked at Alan. “Sorry about wrecking your laptop.”

“It was that or my head, right?” Alan said.

Manly nodded. “Yeah. Then what kind of quotes could you give me?”

CHAPTER 12

Armed and supplied, the group entered a dimly lit employees-only hallway that branched within the large building and allowed them to travel in safety. Thumps and hums told them the ride in this building was still going, too.

Alan and Eric traveled far ahead of the others.

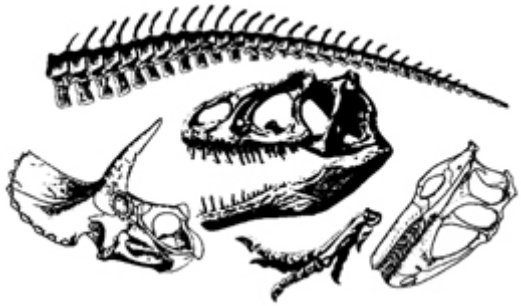
“So what else is bothering you?” Alan asked.

“The truth?” Eric asked.

“I can take it,” Alan said.

“Josh,” Eric said.

“Really.”



“Josh seems like a good guy. I want to help him, but . . .”

Alan nodded. He understood. “*But* he worships you. You’re his hero. And you don’t know how to deal with that, right?”

“Kind of,” Eric said. “Did you ever meet someone who’s read about you, or they’ve read something you’ve written, so they think they know you? And they think it’s cool to say things to you they normally wouldn’t even think about saying to a total stranger?”

“Personal and insulting things, like you’re not real, like you’re on the other side of the glass with them, making commentary on your public persona?” Alan asked.

“Yeah. Like this thing he said about my dad . . .”

Alan sighed. “I suppose it goes with the territory of being a celebrity. Not that we’re movie stars or anything like that, but for some people, we might as well be. And they don’t know how to act around us, how to treat us like we’re regular people.”

A voice called from way behind them. “Hey Dr. Grant, any comment on our current situation? Are you feeling guilty that all these people are at risk because you let those things off the island and let them multiply?”

Alan was about to spin and tell the reporter exactly what he thought when Eric gripped his arm.

“Forget him,” Eric said. “He’s like half the kids at school. He’s baiting you, that’s all. Just remember, you’re the one holding the cards. You’ve got something he wants.”

“My reaction,” Alan said.

“On camera, yeah.”

Alan looked over his shoulder at the camera aimed his way. “What matters now is saving lives. You can quote me on that.”

They reached the end of the corridor and followed Amanda’s plan into the heart of the Kongfrontation ride.

“We need to get on the other side of the building,” Amanda said. “Fastest way is probably taking the tram itself right through the ride.”

They located the tram, which sat at a re-creation of a New York City subway station. The signs above the graffiti-covered concrete walls identified the place as the Roosevelt Island station near the Fifty-Ninth Street Bridge. The TV monitors all around them were blank, and shadows wrapped around every corner.

The tram had pulled into the station and it sat, doors open, waiting to take its next pre- programmed trip. Amanda, Eric, and Josh loaded in their supplies, while Manly played back footage of the flyers he had taken during their initial attack and then on the run from the Earthquake building to the restaurant. Alan watched with interest.

“So this is our enemy. There’s six of them,” Manly said.

“Six?” Alan questioned. “I’ve only ever noticed five at one time.”

Manly scanned the video back and played it for the group, identifying each of the six flyers. The trolley car began to hum and a warning came over the loudspeaker that it would leave the station in moments.

“It’s a mystery,” Alan admitted. “But—”

He heard a scratching. A familiar fluttering of wings.

“Turn that off, will you?” Alan said, pointing at the camera.

“It *is* off,” Manly said. “I’m not making that sound.”

Alan and Eric turned at the sound of footsteps. Amanda and Josh were heading their way, her hand on the boy’s shoulder.

Something skittered in the darkness. Another flyer was in the tunnel, beyond the tram car—and it could be on them in seconds.

Amanda and Josh heard the sounds and froze.

“Manly, here’s what I need you to do,” Alan said. “Do you have a volume control on that thing?”

The reporter nodded.

“Set it to full blast, wind the footage back to where one of those things is really squawking, then kick the camera as far as you can without breaking it.”

“Not a chance,” Manly said. He lifted his baseball bat.

“No story’s worth your life,” Alan said.

“You’ve never worked for the *Examiner*.”

“Fine, then it’s not worth *our* lives,” Alan said. He reached for the camera, but Manly was too quick for him. The reporter snatched it up and ran into the tram car.

The Pteranodon who’d been lurking in the shadows sprang at the others!

CHAPTER 13

Eric and the others raced onto the tram as the flyer leaped into the station.

"Preparing to exit," a prerecorded voice said as the last of the group darted into the car—the flyer close behind. The doors slid shut as the Pteranodon jammed its body into the steadily diminishing opening. It squawked in rage as the doors slammed on its shoulders and squeezed its wings together painfully.

Eric and Josh hefted their bats as if it were time for tryouts for their local baseball teams. With camera raised, Manly slid perilously close to the flyer as the car rocked and threw him off balance. He screamed as the Pteranodon's talon swept through the doorway of the slowly moving tram and across his chest, tearing open his shirt.

BLACK PTERANODON

Alan hauled the reporter back from the creature's claw as Eric and Josh swung their bats at the trapped flyer. The Pteranodon dodged the flying sticks of wood, and its powerful beak fastened on the closest bat. It wrested the bat from Josh and whipped it around, keeping the humans at a distance as it pried at the doors.

The tram picked up speed and sailed toward the tunnel. The Pteranodon looked to one side at the wall rushing its way and yanked itself free. The doors hissed shut and the flyer smacked against the wall, spinning and fluttering to the tracks behind the tram.

Manly looked a little pale. The gashes on his shirt were turning deep red.

“Gangway, mom with a mission here,” Amanda said as she brought one of the first-aid kits over. He took off his shirt, exposing his sweat-soaked, rippling muscles.

“Hmmmph,” Amanda said with a frown as she cleaned his wounds. They weren’t deep, but they bled a lot. “If I wasn’t married and you weren’t a jerk, I could almost be impressed.”

“Thanks.”

“I said almost.”

Eric nodded at a medallion Manly wore around his neck. “What’s that?”

“My first award. A journalism competition when I was in high school.” He looked away, a little embarrassed. “My good-luck charm.”

A saying was inscribed on the medallion: WITHOUT THE SPOONS AMONGST US, WHO WOULD STIR THINGS UP?

The tram passed a realistic-looking subway car torn from its track and a demolished police car near a gushing fire hydrant. Turning a corner, they saw Kong hanging from the Fifty-Ninth Street Bridge, a police helicopter hovering nearby.

Kong charged at their subway tram, which shook and dipped toward the river. Manly and Amanda were almost knocked from their feet.

Suddenly, a sharp crack sounded from the tram’s rear. Eric spun and saw the flyer smacking its beak against their rear window.

Kong roared—and the flyer jumped away in surprise. The tram left Kong behind, but the flyer returned. The Pteranodon smashed against the window but couldn’t break through.

Suddenly, another Kong burst from the roof of a damaged building ahead. He reached out and grabbed the tram, giving it a mighty shake.

The Pteranodon held on to the rear window, smacking its beak on the glass. Then a fiery explosion from behind Kong made the flyer *screee* at the top of its lungs and take flight.

The tram settled into the station and the doors opened. The group leaped onto the platform, carrying what they could of the supplies they’d gathered. The *caw*s of the

angered Pteranodon grew louder as the flyer closed in again. This end of the ride was so vast and wide open that there was nowhere to hide!

"The fish," Eric said. "We can distract it with the fish—"

"No good!" Alan said. "Given a choice, these things will go for live prey every time."

"Besides, it's ticked off," Manly said. "And so am I."

Manly slipped his camera to Josh. "Just make sure you keep me in the frame."

"What are you doing?" Alan yelled.

Manly darted back inside the tram's open doorway, waving his bloody shirt around.

"Come on, you think you're so smart," Manly said as the flyer came into view. He waved his baseball bat in the Pteranodon's direction to get its attention.

The Pteranodon eyed the situation: Alan and four humans with bats in one group, and a lone, unarmed human elsewhere. It went for Manly!

As the flyer shot into the air, folding its wings to soar into the tram, Manly tossed the shirt high. The flyer screeched as the fabric closed over its face, and Manly dove low, barely avoiding the flyer's raking rear claws as it flew into the tram. An instant later, Manly barreled out of the tram, and the doors hissed shut, trapping the flyer inside.

The Pteranodon screamed in frustration and raced around frantically, its wings flapping wildly. It looked like a moth caught in a sealed jar!

"Okay," Amanda said. "Now what?"

Manly took the camera from Josh. "Now we get to that communications room and let the outside world know what we've seen."

"For once, I agree with him," Alan said. "If there's a computer, we can upload his footage as an e-mail attachment. Knowledge is power. The more information people on the outside have, the better equipped they'll be to deal with this."

Alan nodded toward the trapped Pteranodon.

"Tape some of that racket," Alan said, looking at his map. "I've got an idea."

CHAPTER 14

The chopper descended quickly over Orlando. The side door was open wide and one member of the city's animal control unit sat in a harness, his legs dangling. A high-powered long-range tranquilizer gun was gripped tightly in his hands. His partner was perched behind him with a video camera. The man's shoulder-holstered sidearm was filled with Teflon-coated armor-piercing bullets.

"I'm still thinking maybe we should have gone in on foot," Kelly LeCroix said as the chopper sailed over Universal Studios and continued to descend. He was a handsome, well-muscled African American with brown eyes hidden behind his dark shades.

"These things have the advantage of the high ground," Jack McCanley said, shouting to be heard over the heavy beating of the chopper's wings. He had short, thinning red hair shaved to a crew cut and covered with a baseball cap. His face was thin, his look determined. "This way, we'll be even higher."

Kelly sighed. "So—you up for this?"

"No. You?"

He laughed. "No." Playing scared was a ritual with them, a way of easing their all too natural and reasonable fears.

“We stick with the plan,” Jack said. “Aerial recon first. We need a good lay of the land. Try to assess any damage.”

“And casualties.”

Jack gripped his partner’s shoulder. “Yeah.”

The park was now coming well into view. Kelly hoisted the camera and aimed it at the many buildings and streets below. “How many would you say we’ve bagged?”

“Gators or bears?” Kelly asked.

“Both.”

Kelly leaned out a little and checked the scratches on the side of their chopper. They only counted the animals they captured alive. Termination was a last resort, a kind of failure. “A baker’s dozen.”

“Right, lucky thirteen.”

“Yeah, the last was that bear that knocked on that woman’s door in Oviedo, then just sat on the porch until we came.”

“I remember. Wish they could all be like that.”

Kelly nodded. They had joked about how that one had been too easy; they’d probably have to really work for the next one. As it turned out, they had no idea what they’d be in for.

The chopper swung over the great lagoon at the center of the park. Jack caught the entire scene with his zoom lens. “They’ve herded all the people into the lagoon. Could be close to a hundred visitors. Two of the Pteranodons are circling. Two more are perched on boats in the harbor, pecking anyone trying to climb out of the water.”

“How many killed?”

“No floaters. A couple of people lying on the boardwalk. They might just be knocked out.”

Kelly raised his weapon and put his eye to his sight. “Then we should get this done quickly.”

“Negative. Recon only. Who knows what might happen if we get those things stirred up?”

Kelly lowered his weapon. “Yeah.”

Looking over his shoulder, Jack told the pilot to take them out of here.

Kelly finally allowed himself to relax.

“I was reading up on the way here,” Jack said. “Pteranodons aren’t even dinosaurs. They just lived during the Dinosaur Age. They’re actually winged reptiles. They’re more like birds than anything.”

“So what are they doing here?” Kelly asked. “What do they want?”

The chopper flew high over the lagoon. Jack frowned. “My best guess? Nesting.”

Suddenly, one of the flyers whipped around and sailed right for them. Kelly aimed his tranq rifle and fired twice at the Pteranodon as it sailed perilously close to the chopper. He missed both times, though he felt the updraft from the flyer’s thirty-foot wingspan.

“Whoa!” Kelly yelled.

“Don’t worry, they look tough, but they’re hollow-boned, really light,” Jack said, talking much too quickly as he drew his sidearm. “About thirty or forty pounds, that’s all.”

“Uh-huh,” Kelly said, watching for the Pteranodon as he patted his spare cartridge belt. Still there. Good.

“What, you don’t believe me?” Jack said nervously, priming his gun.

“Sure, it’s just . . . I mean—I read this article in *Time,* and it said InGen played around with stuff. Who knows if—”

The flyer changed direction suddenly, slicing directly under the helicopter and disappearing from sight. Both men tensed.

“Anything?” Jack called to the pilot.

“I don’t see it,” the pilot yelled.

“The sound of our blades should be scaring the life out of that thing!” Jack said. “They’re like birds, and birds scare easy.”

Not like birds, Kelly thought. *Not even close.*

“We’ve got a loudspeaker, ultrasound, but none of it’s hooked up,” Jack said. His voice was shrill.

Suddenly, the Pteranodon rose up on the opposite side of the helicopter, allowing the vacuum of the machine’s blades to haul it upward. Kelly saw the creature in all its glory for only a second. The flyer’s dark eyes met his; then its fiery-looking wings flapped sharply and the chopper jerked as if it had been grabbed by a giant hand on one side.

The flyer had landed on the chopper’s opposite rudder. Each time it flapped its wings, the helicopter bounced in the air. The Pteranodon *had* to weigh five or six hundred pounds!

Kelly felt his lunch rise as the chopper tilted and trembled. Jack spun and aimed his gun at the opposite window. He caught only a glimpse of his friend’s ashen expression and shaking hands.

“No!” Kelly screamed.

Jack emptied the gun. Glass shattered as the flyer dropped away, capsizing the helicopter with a thrust of its powerful rear claws! Bullets ricocheted as the chopper spiraled down toward a grove of trees.

Kelly’s world whirled around and he felt as if he were caught up in the chaotic fury of a twister. He tried to draw a breath, he wanted to scream, and the trees shot up at them.

He never got the chance.

The adult male Pteranodon dropped away from the great metal enemy, easily avoiding the crash and the great fireball that rose up. He considered checking the wreckage for carrion, but there was no need. Twilight was fast approaching. With the night would come the first of many feasts his family would enjoy in this place.

He returned to the lagoon and found a scene of confusion. His mate, Flood, was frantic. His son Spike had returned, though he seemed shaken, agitated. Trip was also on

hand. But Lightning, his quickest and eldest son, was still missing.

Fire announced that he would delay the feast. Give his eldest son time to return.

CHAPTER 15

They found the communications room quickly. Manly went to a computer in the corner and hooked up his digital camera. Amanda practically attacked the phone, but all she could summon up was another series of busy signals. Eric and Josh surveyed the equipment with Alan.

"We can tap into the park's loudspeakers and announcement system from here," Eric said as he pointed at a set of controls.

"So I could talk to my dad?" Josh said, his chest heaving with excitement.

"He'd hear *us,*" Alan said. "We wouldn't hear him."

PTERANODON

Josh nodded, his shoulders sagging. "Right. I didn't think of that."

Eric understood. When he was lost on Isla Sorna, the logical conclusion wasn't always the first one he came to, either. And yet . . . Josh was glaring at him, as if he felt Eric was somehow to blame for things.

"Come on, it'll be okay," Eric said as he put his hand on Josh's shoulder.

"You don't know that," Josh said sharply. "You don't know anything."

Eric drew back and let Josh busy himself in another corner of the room, checking out a control manual.

Alan went over to Manly. "You know how to do this?" Alan asked.

"Yes, not a problem," the reporter said. He was wearing Alan's flannel shirt. Alan still wore his T-shirt and hat. "Local and state authorities. Animal control. On-site security. The e-mail addresses you gave me for your people on Isla Sorna. You name it, I've got 'em covered."

"Good."

"I want to get through this just like anyone else. All we have to do is log on and hit send." Manly hit the sign-in button. The computer made several attempts to log on, but the Net was busy.

"It'll just keep trying until it gets through," Manly said. He looked at his watch. "Must be getting dark by now."

"Maybe they'll go to sleep," Amanda said. "Then everyone can just sneak out of the lagoon. We could go, too."

"I don't think so," Alan said.

Eric agreed. "There's been plenty of sightings of these guys since they left Isla Sorna, but none of them mentioned the young. So I'd say all the stories of people spotting them were made up: people looking to get their names in the papers, or thinking they saw something they didn't see."

"It would make sense that the flyers would adopt a nocturnal lifestyle," Alan said. "Sleep during the day, hunt at night, keep away from highly civilized areas to avoid detection and capture."

"Pteranodons spent most of their time in the air," Eric said. "They had to eat almost constantly to have the energy to fly."

"Then those people out there . . . they're a food supply!" Manly said.

"It might not be that," Eric said quickly, realizing Josh might panic. "Back on the island, all the dinosaurs and the Pteranodons were caged. Humans kept them penned. Maybe they just want to keep the people where they can see them. That way, they won't feel threatened."

Josh nodded and looked away.

Eric exchanged glances with his mom and Alan. None of them were buying that story for a minute.

Neither was the reporter. Manly leaned against the wall as he waited for the computer to connect. “All right. So you want to deal with this head-on? Let’s. What did you mean before about how Pteranodons ‘did’ this or they ‘did’ that? What we’re dealing with outside are Pteranodons, right?”

“That’s actually the first intelligent observation I’ve heard you make,” said Alan.

“Boys,” Amanda broke in, “don’t fight.”

Alan drew a deep, shuddering breath. “Keep in mind, we’re not dealing with Pteranodons plucked out of time and dropped on our doorstep. These are genetically engineered replicas based on limited DNA, the current scientific thought at the time of their ‘construction,’ and whatever whims the human programmers had when they were designing these flyers. They may have thought the Pteranodons could be trained like seals to perform in shows, so the creatures were given a more advanced intellect and the strength to perform stunts like plucking an actor from a crowd and flying away with him. Who knows what was on John Hammond’s mind?”

“More dinosaurs,” Amanda said.

Alan shook his head. “Ah—no. Pteranodons aren’t actually dinosaurs. Their anatomy is different, so they’re not classified that way. They’re flying reptiles that existed pretty much through the Mesozoic, the 250-million-year span when dinosaurs walked the Earth.”

Amanda crossed her arms over her chest. “Well, whatever they are, they’re not our problem this time. People will come and deal with them, and until then, we’re safe and we’ve got everything we need. We’ve got food and water, we’re in a defensible locale —”

“For the moment,” Alan said.

“There’s no reason for going out there, for risking any of our necks. Let the trained professionals deal with this.”

“Yeah, about that,” Manly said, pointing at the computer screen. The machine had finally logged on.

They watched an Internet broadcast of the helicopter going down in solemn silence.

"Well, listen," Manly said. "The authorities—"

"They're not equipped," Eric said in a low voice. A dozen more terrible scenarios of failed rescues raced through his mind.

"Neither are we," Amanda said.

"My dad's out there," Josh said. "You said those things feed at night. It's almost night right now. All those people—it could have been any of us!"

"There might be a way," Alan said, looking at the map and describing some ideas that had been forming in his mind.

"Okay," Amanda said. "New plan . . ."

Trapped within the tram, the Pteranodon with lightning markings struck the same spot on the transparent wall over and over. Slowly, finally, a tiny crack appeared. The longer and harder he hit it, the more hairline fissures stole out from the central point of impact.

Soon he would be free.

CHAPTER 16

Eric felt the pressure of Josh's gaze as the group prepared for what was ahead. Josh expected so much from him—but what could Eric do?

"Josh, listen," Eric said. "I know you had a lot of ideas in your head about me from reading my book, but you have to understand—I didn't do what I did on Isla Sorna because I wanted to be a hero. I wrote the book because I had to get this stuff out of my head. I was having nightmares like every night. And so many people had questions. That's why I did it. But I'm not—"

"You don't have to say anything else," Josh said. "I already figured out you're nothing special."

Anger sliced through Eric. "Fine. Just remember that you were here for those three summers straight, which means you know more about this place than most of us. That puts the responsibility on you."

"Right," Josh said. He turned away from Eric and went back to the park manuals.

Eric sat in a corner and watched the others.

"I'm coming with you," Manly said as Alan snapped on a pager set to vibrate.

Alan stared at him with contempt. "Give me one reason I should trust you."

Manly's smile was thin. "I'm a coward. I want to live. And I don't think that's going to happen if there's no one out there watching your back."

"That's two reasons. Fine. But the camera stays here."

The reporter hesitated, then agreed. Alan looked at the three who would be staying behind.

"You're sure you know what to do?" he asked.

"Between the three of us, we'll manage," Amanda said, nodding at Josh and Eric.

The time came for Alan and Manly to leave. Manly looked over at his camera. "Just one thing before we head out."

He turned the camera around, aimed it toward the floor, and stripped off the flannel shirt Alan had let him borrow. He lay down on the floor. "Josh, buddy, see if I'm in frame."

Josh checked. "Yeah."

"Okay," Manly said. "So here it is. My 'just in case.' My parting gift to humanity."

He began a complicated series of sit-ups and other exercises. "People, what you're looking at is the perfect ab crunch. It's taken me a lifetime to get this down, but look at the results. And I've never been to a chiropractor or a back doctor in my life. Now the secret's yours."

Grinning, he got up and turned off the camera. He aimed it toward Josh. "Got anything you want to say?"

"Who'd want to hear it?" Josh asked.

Manly waited.

"No, nothing," Josh said, hanging his head. "I don't have anything to say for myself."

Manly looked at Alan, who shook his head and said it was time to go.

Eric knew he might never see his mentor again. The same thought seemed to flicker before Alan, at least for a moment. Then he frowned.

“Don’t do anything stupid,” Alan said.

Eric’s gaze narrowed. “Look who’s talking.”

Alan nodded sharply and went to the door. He opened it slowly, peered out, and slipped into the corridor with Manly right behind him. The moment the door closed, Amanda locked it up tight.

They were gone—and the power of that thought made Eric feel as if the breath had been taken from him.

“That’s funny,” Amanda said.

“What?” Eric asked.

“The medical supplies. I could have sworn there were more here.” She shrugged. “Doesn’t matter, I guess.”

Eric thought about Manly and the way he left. Something didn’t feel right. Something just didn’t add up.

If only he could figure out what it was . . .

Alan and Manly found spray paint canisters in a storage closet. Before heading out, they sprayed their clothing and as much of their exposed flesh as they could a very dark green. The flyers’ sight appeared to be highly advanced, and they needed to blend with the shadows as best they could.

They took a side door that put them close to the building housing the Earthquake attraction and clung to the shadows as they silently made their way down the boardwalk to a shack overhanging the lagoon. The flyers were cawing louder than ever as stars appeared high above and a chill wind stirred the water of the lagoon. People wept and shouted. The boats rocked as the flyers leaped from one to another.

“I still can’t figure out your angle,” Alan whispered. “Why stick your neck out?”

“You know what your problem is, Grant? You need to learn how to use the media, not let it use you.”

“Oh? Did Bigfoot supply that bit of advice?”

“Whatever.”

They reached the shack but the door was locked.

“Not a problem,” Manly said, fishing something out of his pocket. “I did a piece for the *Evening Star* when I was still local, up in Toronto. Housebreakers, the tricks of the trade, how to guard against them.”

The reporter picked the lock with a thin, sharp tool. Alan looked around nervously. It was a miracle they hadn’t been spotted. The flyers were agitated about something. Alan could feel their tension. *Good. Maybe the plan will work after all.*

Manly continued picking the lock. “My father once told me, ‘Expect the worst from everyone and you won’t be disappointed.’ Well, that’s no way to live your life.”

“I dunno,” Alan said. “Sounds reasonable to me.”

“Exactly my point.”

The lock sprang open and they darted inside.

Flapping his wings, the adult male Pteranodon with the fiery markings landed on the largest of the boats in the lagoon. The time had come and they were starved. His mate, Flood; her father, the Elder; and their children Spike and Trip called to him. Their need to feed was strong.

But where was his son Lightning? Fire had circled this place of the Keepers several times and urgently called his son, but the young Pteranodon had not appeared. Where was he? Lightning had never before ignored his father’s urgent summons.

Had he been hurt? Had the Keepers harmed another of his children? Or was it something worse?

The waiting had been unbearable. Slowly, Fire watched the sky darken and the bright stars appear. Then came the low golden glow from the constructs of the Keepers, which lit their feasting ground.

A few more moments. No longer. Then—

Cawwrrr!

The sound made Fire's heart leap. He looked up and saw Lightning flying toward him. There was such relief and frustration in his son's tone that Fire was altogether convinced his son had been trapped somewhere, either by accident or design, and he had used his clever nature to claw his way to freedom.

Fire then screeched louder than ever before, signaling his family that the feast could finally begin.

CHAPTER 17

The waiting was the hardest. Eric and his mom stood behind Josh, who had used the computer in the corner of the communications room to call up a live news feed. Satellite cameras were being used to relay the crisis at the lagoon. The flyers were riled up and it was almost full dark. The park's lights illuminated the scene.

The Pteranodons were going crazy, cawing wildly and circling the humans in the lagoon! Suddenly, they began to swoop in. One of the larger flyers reached down with its claws and plucked up a human. Then another swooped in, and another—

PTERANODON

Josh gasped, seeing that one of the people snatched was a dark-haired man in a blue shirt.

"Dad!" Josh yelled.

The screen suddenly went blank.

"They yanked the feed," Amanda said in horror.

"We gotta go," Josh said. "We gotta go now!"

"Alan hasn't called with the signal," Amanda said.

Josh rocked back in his chair, causing Eric and Amanda to jump out of his way as he darted to the control panel for the attraction's many outdoor speakers. He flicked the on button and started the looped recording from Manly's camera before Eric or Amanda could stop him.

CHAPTER 18

The sound came from the other side of the park. An angry, unmistakable hiss, a screeching, and a furious, frantic whipping of wings. It was low at first; then it rose, growing louder, moving from one part of their new domain to another.

Fire *cawww*ed with concern. His son was in trouble!

Dropping the human, he rose into the air. The feast was abandoned as Fire flew high, his mate right behind him. Lightning sounded frantic. The sounds moved and Fire soared, following them. Lightning was in trouble, Lightning was—

Lightning was at the lagoon.

BLACK PTERANODON

It was a trick! He doubled back and saw Keepers climbing onto the boats and flooding into the docks. His sons were clawing and attacking as many as they could, but some were getting away!

Screeching in rage, Fire led his mate and the Elder to the fray.

The Keepers would pay for this.

CHAPTER 19

"Hurry!" Alan commanded, fumbling with the fireworks.

"You hurry," Manly said, his hands shaking as he primed a launcher.

Everything had happened too quickly. They weren't ready. Why hadn't Amanda waited for his signal?

Manly looked out the window. "They're going crazy! Those people don't stand a chance."

Alan looked down at the stockpile of fireworks around them.

Grimly, he said, "Maybe they do."

Eric ran through the darkness, the screams from the lagoon rising. Josh was ahead of him, Amanda behind. The chilly night wind sliced through them like icy daggers.

"Eric, we've got to get out!" Amanda yelled. "Eric!"

They were racing toward the lagoon. The flyers were overhead, diving down at the terrified horde of people trying to escape.

Suddenly, a deafening explosion came from five hundred yards off, and the shack where Alan and Manly had been disintegrated. Shards of wood and debris shot out over the lagoon as the fireworks ignited and a kaleidoscope of brilliant colors burst out. A curling, sparkling fire clawed at the night sky as streamers and rockets shot out in every direction!

"Alan," Eric whispered, shocked so badly his legs nearly gave out beneath him.

Cawwhhrrr!

In their confusion and terror, the flyers fled from the lagoon, and waves of people lapped onto the boardwalk and sped toward the street that meant freedom.

"Dad!" Josh yelled. Not even Eric, only a dozen feet away, could hear the cry.

Some people had been clawed; many were hurt.

Josh saw a woman who had been in the water near his dad. Her blouse was covered with blood and she was terrified.

"That guy you were with," Josh said as he grabbed her arm. "The guy in the blue shirt!"

She shook her head and tore herself away from him. "Let me go! They're gonna get me, too!"

The woman was lost in the crowd.

Eric caught up to Josh. "We've got to go. We don't have much time."

"Why didn't you do something?" Josh hollered.

A voice stopped him. "Josh?"

"Dad!" Josh yelled, racing toward the smiling man. His father was shivering and drenched. He grabbed Josh in a hug, then ran with him into the crowd.

Amanda snagged Eric's arm. She pointed at the main thoroughfare. "Eric, the way out is this way. Come on, honey!"

Eric saw the female flyer soar away from her disoriented family, heading across the lagoon toward the open area housing Fievel's Playland. A man in a flannel shirt ran after her.

Manly. If he was alive, Alan could be, too! They must have dived under the water before setting off the explosion!

But—why was Manly following the female? The other five Pteranodons flew higher and higher, the fireworks driving them away as they rocketed into the sky.

The other five. Six, total.

This time. The first time that they knew of.

Suddenly, it all became clear to Eric. He understood what Manly was up to and knew he had to stop him!

Manly knew he was risking his life as he raced after the female Pteranodon, but he no longer cared. The story was all that mattered. The bright, shining future he'd been chasing all his life was in his grasp—and he'd get it, no matter the cost.

The adult flyer settled down, wings flapping, near a small storage shed. The door was open, just a crack. Pitiful chirps and cries drifted out.

He'd been right. He stopped, drawing from his pockets the small bottle and the wide band of gauze he'd taken from the medical supplies.

"There weren't six of you," Manly whispered. "It was seven all along. That's why we saw six of you total, but only five at any one time. You've got someone wounded, and one of you was always staying with the flyer in the shed. Until dinnertime, anyway. Then you were going to bring him back something to eat."

The female spun on him, her great wings kicking up a breeze. She *cawww*ed and launched herself at him.

Manly responded with an athlete's reflexes. He pitched the bottle right at the female's face. It shattered and the female screamed as rubbing alcohol splattered in her eyes, blinding her. Manly snatched up a piece of debris that had fallen from the explosion in the lagoon and smacked her on the side of the head. She collapsed in a heap and he bent beside her, tying her beak closed with the gauze.

Rising triumphantly, he opened the door to the shed and peered inside. What he saw made him grin ear to ear.

“You are going to make me a fortune,” Manly said. “On tour, coming to your town, Manly Wilks and—”

A tap on the shoulder made him nearly jump out of his skin. He spun so fast that he never even saw the blow that sent him reeling to the ground and into complete darkness.

CHAPTER 20

Eric stared at the figure on the ground. “He’s out cold. How’d you do that?”

“Ah, he’s got a glass jaw,” Amanda said, rubbing her knuckles. “They always do when they’re that pretty.”

Eric looked inside and saw the shuddering, golden-winged flyer.

“He might be dangerous,” Amanda cautioned.

Eric shook his head. “He’s in too much pain. He looks like he’s been burned somehow.”

YOUNG PTERANODON

A sudden fluttering of wings startled the pair. Eric saw flyers coming in from every direction. One settled beside the downed female and tore off the gauze wrapped around her beak.

The others darted toward them.

Eric grabbed his mother’s arm and hauled her inside the shed.

Alan climbed up a pier, water draining from his clothes. The fireworks were over. Only a small pile of rubble was left where the fireworks shed had been.

He saw all the flyers gathering near another small shed and heard human voices. Stumbling on, he came to the shed just as shooters converged on the scene from all sides. SWAT teams. Local police. Army reservists.

Eric and Amanda were in the shed. Manly was on the ground, the wobbly female's hind claw on his back.

"Don't shoot!" Alan yelled. "There are people in the way."

He looked inside, where Amanda and Eric were talking. She took off the small medical pouch she had strapped on in the first-aid station.

From within, she drew out a tube of burn cream and gently rubbed it on the wounded flyer's wings.

The golden flyer eyed her curiously, with no fear, and chirped happily. The anesthetic in the cream immediately took away the pain.

"Dr. Grant, get out of the way," the SWAT team leader said. "We know what we're doing. We've got to neutralize the threat!"

"Really?" Alan asked. "They're not doing anything. Which of you wants to take the shot that starts the bloody end of this? And I mean bloody. Which of you is so sure they can't miss the flyers and hit those people? Which of you thinks you won't just make them angry or scare them off so all this happens again another day?"

The mass of shooters edged around the scene uncomfortably.

Alan looked at the alpha male. "There's another way. . . ."

CHAPTER 21

"Meep," Goldie said, resting gently next to the Keepers and munching pieces of fish they offered.

Goldie's father couldn't believe it. Neither could his mother. The Keepers were helping.

Fire and Flood had tried to bring Goldie food, but he hadn't eaten. They had cooed to him and bathed him and sheltered him, but all their care had not eased his cries of pain. For the first time since he had been burned, Goldie looked as if he might one day fly again.

YOUNG PTERANODON

Fire knew this place was not for them. It seemed that no matter how far they had flown from the island of their birth, no place was for them.

But what could they do? Where could they go?

Home. That was the only answer. And the others knew it, too.

Fire looked to the Keepers—and slowly bowed his head. They were going home.

CHAPTER 22

Eric was tired and wired at the same time on the first leg of his journey back to Enid. His body was exhausted and his mind was still racing as the plane jetted through the bright morning sky. Beside him, Amanda was sound asleep, the soft, comforting thrum of the engines singing her a lullaby.

Eric watched a morning news show, his in-flight headphones turned down low. It wasn't until footage of the flyers came on that he turned them up.

"And here you see a truly one-of-a-kind spectacle," the newscaster said. "The Pteranodons of Isla Sorna and their children are going home. . . ."

The image accompanying the narration was of the flyers sailing behind a pair of old-fashioned biplanes that had been painted and made up to look a little like Pteranodons themselves. A small harness dangled from one of them, allowing the still-healing littlest flyer to soar with his loved ones.

The scene cut to a studio interview. A clean-cut, well-rested man in a dark suit introduced the first of his guests, a reporter Eric knew all too well. Manly wore a

designer suit. Makeup covered the bruise Amanda had left on his jaw.

"Mr. Wilks, I understand you've been in negotiations since last night with a handful of top publishers for the rights to your harrowing story. Is that correct?"

"The talks are ongoing," Manly said confidently. "But I suspect we'll have an announcement in time for your lunch program."

"So you're an expert on Pteranodons," the interviewer said.

Manly grinned. "Absolutely. I don't mean to toot my own horn, but I was the one who studied the behavior of these creatures and discovered the secret that won the day. These are intelligent, highly evolved beings, possessed of a unique social structure. You'll read all about it in my book."

The reporter raised an eyebrow. "And from a remote locale, we have another expert joining us. Please welcome Dr. Alan Grant."

A small box appeared, showing Alan in a remote studio. Manly shrank a little at the sight of the paleontologist.

"Good morning," Alan said.

"Dr. Grant, do you have anything to say about Mr. Wilks's comments?" the newscaster asked.

"I'm intrigued by his assertion that Pteranodons have a completely unique social structure," Alan said. "Like nothing else found in nature."

Manly cleared his throat. "Yes, that's right."

"And you've studied Mesozoic life forms for how long? I mean, besides your illustrious work for the tabloids, like these. . . ."

A series of ridiculous headlines flashed on the screen, all culled from Manly's work: OLYMPIC ATHLETE HAS DINOSAUR DNA! RAPTORS ROB CONVENIENCE STORE! I MARRIED A MASTODON!

They cut back to Manly, who was rocking uncomfortably in his chair. "Everyone has to make a living. But those stories were well researched and scientifically accurate."

The reporter frowned. "Mastodons were from the Ice Age. Not the Dinosaur Age."

"Well—no," Manly said. "Clearly not."

Alan spoke up. "And Pteranodons follow a social structure much like birds. That's something you can read more about in the book *I'm* writing about this incident, the deal for which has already been signed."

Manly sank in his chair, looking completely busted.

Good, Eric thought.

He took off the headphones as the news broadcast went to commercials, and someone tapped him on the shoulder. Looking up, he saw Josh standing in the aisle. They were on the same connecting flight. When they changed airplanes in North Carolina, Eric would head home to Enid, Josh to San Diego.

"My dad and I were talking about what happened," Josh said. "He made me realize some stuff I should have figured out myself. I guess that's what dads do. Your dad helped you a lot."

Eric nodded. "My dad's a great guy."

"I just wanted to say—I'm sorry I acted like a jerk," Josh said. "I wanted to meet this celebrity. I blew my chance to maybe make a friend. If I could do it all over again, I would. . . ."

Eric smiled. "I'm sorry, what'd you say your name was?"

Josh was surprised; then he understood. "I'm Josh."

Eric held out his hand. "I'm Eric Kirby. Glad to meet you."

Smiling wide, Josh took Eric's hand.

THIS WAS *NOT* A PART OF THE SHOW!

Eric struggled to get out of his seat as the full-grown male Pteranodon blurred through the sky, set on a dive-bombing course for the little boat.

"We've gotta get away!" Eric yelled.

The "captain" of the *Jaws* boat ride hadn't seen the threat. He put his hands out, attempting to stay in character while he tried to calm what he thought was an overexcited young customer. "Hey, don't worry. I'm a trained professional—we'll be fine!"

Then he looked over his shoulder at the water and made a broad, theatrical gulp as the drumming pulse of the *Jaws* theme grew louder and more insistent.

"Not the shark! Up there, up there!" Eric yelled.

His mother looked up first—and screamed.

A couple of people looked up, then laughed and screamed, too, thinking it was all part of the fun. A few saw the real threat as it *cawww*ed a final time and swooped in for its lightning-fast attack.

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SCOTT CIENCIN is a bestselling author of adult and children's fiction. Praised by *Science Fiction Review* as "one of today's finest fantasy writers" and listed in *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy,* Scott has written over forty works, many published by Warner, Avon, and TSR. For Random House Children's Publishing, Scott has been a favorite author in the popular DINOTOPIA series, for which he's written six titles: *Windchaser, Thunder Falls, Sky Dance, Lost City, Return to Lost City,* and *The Explorers*.

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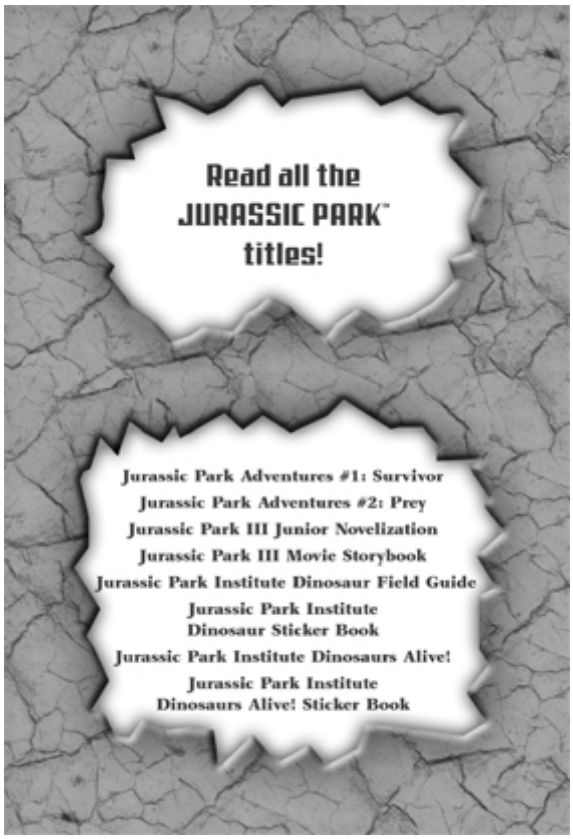
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